

**MINUTES OF THE PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING OF
BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE,
ON TUESDAY 23RD JANUARY 2024**

Present: Councillor Dempsey in the Chair
Councillors Allen, Atkin, Ball, Brereton, Ellis, Evans, Reeves, Scott, Sheridan
and Simcock

Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald
RFO / Deputy Clerk – Mrs. C. Caddock
Administrative Assistant – Mrs. H. Thomas

3 Members of the Public

Apologies: Councillor Bowden (work)

Code of Conduct – Declaration of Interests

The Chair reminded Members of their responsibility to declare any personal interest or prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when the item is reached.

Birchwood Carnival Committee - Councillors Atkin, Sheridan and Simcock.

303/23-24 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 190 and 191 below).

Councillor Reeves **proposed** the payment of accounts be approved; Councillor Scott **seconded** the proposal. This was **unanimously resolved** by those Members present.

304/23-24 **DECEMBER 2023 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING
MINUTES**

Councillor Atkin **proposed**, Councillor Brereton **seconded**, and it was **unanimously resolved** that: the Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting, held on 19th December 2023, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

PROGRESS REPORT

305/23-24 **BENCHES**

The RFO stated that the consultation document has been sent out to residents who live close by to the area in Gorse Covert where BTC has indicated they would like an additional bench to be located. They have a return date of 19th February 2024, and we hope to start receiving responses soon.

A draft consultation letter was sent to Locking Stumps Primary School regarding the area where they proposed a new bench could be installed. Locking Stumps Primary School has been awarded a £500 grant to put towards a community bench. They approved the document which will be sent out to residents and local businesses soon.

306/23-24 **GDPR**

To note that Officers still need to confirm to our Data Controller whether the personal data categories processed by the Town Council have changed. The Clerk and RFO will review the categories as soon as possible.

307/23-24 **INTERIM AUDIT REPORT**

To note that the RFO has submitted the completed Audit Checklist to the internal auditor, along with some documents, as requested. Additional documents are likely to be requested by the auditor prior to the completion of his report.

308/23-24 **LEGIONELLA RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Legionella Risk Assessment was undertaken on 9th January 2024. A comprehensive report has been received. Some matters within the report need to be clarified.

Some issues require immediate action, which will involve additional expenditure. These include the fitting of either thermostatic mixing valves or thermostatic mixing taps (so that the boiler temperature is maintained at a high level without reaching the hot water taps at potentially scalding temperatures, but at a temperature of at least 50⁰C). A water temperature monitoring probe is required, along with 'log books' for recording both the temperature, and the regular flushing of some rarely used outlet pipes. The RFO said that these have been purchased and came to £14.96.

Staff are also now required to undertake training. The RFO suggested getting one member of the Office Team, and one member of the Maintenance Team to undertake the training, and Members were happy with this.

The assessor said that as this was the first assessment we had undertaken, it might have been preferable to have samples taken for lab analysis.

The RFO has received a quote of £87.50 for the recommended lab tests, which would test 8 outlets. Members **unanimously approved** this expenditure.

Action Clerk's office to order the test kits.

The RFO stated that 'Terrain' will be our primary contact, and someone from BTC will be our secondary contact.

Councillor Atkin offered a lower cost suggestion as he and several other Councillors questioned the value in installing new valves. He said that by slightly increasing the hot water setting on BTC's combination boiler from 50 to 55-56, this may allow the water to heat to the correct temperature.

After discussion, Member's agreed that Officers would try Councillor Atkin's suggestion before looking at installing thermostatic mixing valves or thermostatic mixing taps.

309/23-24 **PRECEPT CONFIRMATION**

The RFO stated she wrote to WBC, as necessary (by their deadline of 12th January 2024) detailing BTC's precept requirement of £383,095 for 2024/2025.

310/23-24 **GENERAL MATTERS FOR REPORTING / NOTING**

- (a) To note that we are still awaiting the second grant payment for the EV Chargers to be paid to us. This has been chased once more, via signed letter, which was included in Member's papers, sent to be 'signed for'. The RFO stated that Officers are unsure what else to try, if there is no response to this letter, other than take them to small claims court which would cost a small sum of money.
- (b) To note that the paediatric defibrillator pads were received today and will be installed for use tomorrow.
- (c) To note that the RFO contacted E-on Next regarding our business plan for the supply of electricity at the Locking Stumps multi-use games area.
- (d) To remind Members that the Senior Maintenance Operative has undertaken his First Aid Refresher training (15/16th January) and that two other members of staff will be undertaking full First Aid at Work training on 6/7/8th March 2024.
- (e) To note that one member of the Maintenance Team undertook brushcutter and hedgecutter training on 19th January 2024.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS

311/23-24 **BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION**

To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounting period 1st April 2023 – 31st December 2023.

The payroll figure for November 2023 was £12,819.12 (9) staff. The payroll figure for December 2023 was £14,438.53 (9 staff). The December figure included 8 month's back-pay following the approval of a pay rise for 2 x staff members.

After consideration and approval by Members, the schedules will be signed by the Clerk or RFO, and the Chair, as soon as is practicable.

Councillor Reeves **proposed**, Councillor Atkin **seconded**, and it was **unanimously resolved** that Members are happy with the schedules as presented. These will be signed by the RFO and the Chair, following the meeting.

312/23-24 **EMPLOYMENT LAW CONSULTANTS**

To note that we have received an invoice for the upcoming annual renewal of our specialist Employment Law consultants, which was due for renewal on 13th January 2024. The price has increased by 2% (£27.00) to £1,461.00 +VAT since last year. Officers recommend renewing this contract for one more year.

During the summer of 2024, Officers intend to undertake a price and service comparison exercise, with a view to potentially contracting a company that offers both Health and Safety and Employment Law services. Currently we have separate specialist consultants for these two services.

Members **unanimously resolved** to renew the contract for one more year.

313/23-24 **CO-OPERATIVE BANK SAVINGS ACCOUNT**

The RFO stated that in order to keep our Public Sector Reserve Account open, as there has been no activity on it in the last 13 months, Officers transferred £100.00 from BTC's Co-operative Current Account into it.

The RFO said that from 6th March 2024, the Public Sector Reserve Account is no longer going to be offered by the bank. BTC's account will be automatically transferred to the Co-operative's Business Select Instant Access savings account. This will continue to have an interest rate of 1.63% AER variable.

The RFO said that there are other Business Savings account options with the Co-operative Bank that the Council might wish to consider:

35 Day Notice – which has a 2.13% AER variable – calculated daily and paid twice a year, or 95 Day Notice – Which has a 2.51% AER variable – calculated daily and paid twice a year.

The RFO noted that this account is rarely accessed, and it would not be likely that the account would need to be accessed sooner than the maximum 95 Day Notice period.

Based on the information given by the RFO, Members **unanimously resolved** to opt for the 95 Day Notice account with the highest AER variable. Members also **resolved** to keep the same amount of around £10,000 in the new account.

Action RFO to arrange new bank account with the Co-operative Bank.

314/23-24 **BIRCHWOOD CARNIVAL 2024**

Councillors Atkin, Sheridan and Simcock have declared an interest in this due to being members of the Carnival Committee.

The RFO stated that BTC has historically supported the event financially by providing grant aid for the marquee, tables, chairs, a generator and portaloos. The amount of grant aid awarded in 2023/2024 was £2,375.50 plus VAT.

At the October 2023 Part I Finance Meeting (minute 198/23-24 (d)(ix)), the Council **resolved** in principal, to financially support the 2024 Carnival by way of funding the hire of the marquee, tables, chairs, a 2.5Kva generator with 10l of fuel, and portaloos.

Swift Loos has indicated that the cost for the portaloos will remain the same as last year (£600.00 +VAT).

The Carnival Committee has yet to receive a quotation from the company that supplies the marquee, chairs and tables, and generator, but is expected to be in the region of £1,800 +VAT.

As the Carnival Committee is in the process of making bookings for this year's event, the RFO asked Members if the Council would be minded to formally approve a grant to a maximum amount at tonight's meeting, in order for the Committee to secure bookings for these items prior to receiving their formal grant aid application form.

After a discussion, Members **unanimously resolved** to agree to a maximum of £3,000 for a grant for the 2024 Birchwood Carnival.

315/23-24 MAINTENANCE TEAM RESOURCES

The RFO stated that BTC have commenced the recruitment process for a full time Community Maintenance Team Operative, with a view to the person starting early on in the new financial year. This has been posted on Facebook and is live on the Government's "find a job" page. The closing date for applications is 16th February 2024.

The Chair thanked the remaining residents for attending and explained that members of the public are excluded from further parts of the meeting, due to the confidential nature of items being discussed in Part II finance.

The remaining residents left the meeting.

This part of the meeting concluded at 7.20 pm

Payment of Accounts:						
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual November 2023 and part of the December 2023 accounts						
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
15.11.2023	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 40.00		£ 40.00
16.11.2023	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) Nov. 2023	£ 232.11	£ 46.42	£ 278.53
16.11.2023	DD	ASL (previously t/a CopyriteSystems)	Photocopying charges	£ 28.37	£ 5.68	£ 34.05
21.11.2023	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 10.41	£ 0.52	£ 10.93
22.11.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 72.66	£ 14.52	£ 87.18
22.11.2023	*	Radmore & Tucker Ltd.	2 x Stihl BG86 petrol blowers & 1 x Stihl long reach hedgetrimmer	£ 1,017.95	£ 203.59	£ 1,221.54
24.11.2023	*	Viking	Stationery	£ 95.94	£ 19.19	£ 115.13
24.11.2023	*	PREMIOClean	Office cleaning services November 2023	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
24.11.2023	*	JDH Business Services Ltd	Data protection services 2023/24	£ 1,115.00	£ 223.00	£ 1,338.00
28.11.2023	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Heater for reception from Herschel Infrared Heaters	£ 165.83	£ 33.17	£ 199.00
28.11.2023	*	Reimburse C Caddock	PPE - socks from Amazon Seller	£ 20.82	£ 4.17	£ 24.99
29.11.2023	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 56.15	£ 11.23	£ 67.38
29.11.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 161.87	£ 32.36	£ 194.23
30.11.2023	DD	James Todd (Go Cardless)	Payroll services (October 2023 fee)	£ 59.40	£ 11.88	£ 71.28
01.12.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
01.12.2023	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - December monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
01.12.2023	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
01.12.2023	*	Black Box Security Alarm Systems Ltd	Callout to fire alarm fault	£ 112.50	£ 22.50	£ 135.00
01.12.2023	*	Viking	Stationery	£ 59.85	£ 11.97	£ 71.82
01.12.2023	*	Arco	PPE - Safety boots (SJ) and ear defenders	£ 84.38	£ 16.88	£ 101.26
06.12.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 14.31	£ 2.87	£ 17.18
07.12.2023	*	December 2023 Wages	9 staff - <i>Higher than usual as this includes the 2023/2024 wage increase and 8 month's back pay for 2 x staff members</i>	£ 14,438.53		£ 14,438.53
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	K-Mart UK - 200 x large nitrile gloves (PPE)	£ 7.07	£ 1.42	£ 8.49
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Farla Medical Health care - 200 x small nitrile gloves (PPE)	£ 8.33	£ 1.67	£ 10.00
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Hawk Merchandise - 11 x leather safety/driving gloves M&L (PPE)	£ 50.27	£ 10.12	£ 60.39
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Euglove - 1 x small leather working glove (PPE)	£ 8.33	£ 1.66	£ 9.99
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Ekon - 1 x pair XL leather safety driving gloves (PPE)	£ 4.99	£ 1.00	£ 5.99
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Amazon - 24 x antibacterial hand gel 250ml	£ 19.99	£ 4.00	£ 23.99
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Hot UK deals - 600 x medium nitrile gloves **	£ 26.25	£ 5.25	£ 31.50
		** Note re med nitrile gloves purchase	<i>Minus promotion amount</i>	£ 1.56	£ 0.31	£ 1.87
12.12.2023	*	Risley Mot & Truck Ltd	HK64 NNM - investigate front suspension, lubricate upper ball joint (if fault returns may need new upper arm)	£ 60.00	£ 12.00	£ 72.00
12.12.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
13.12.2023	*	Hollis Electrical& Security Services Ltd	5 x fluorescent lighting units replaced with LED units.	£ 333.33	£ 66.67	£ 400.00

Payments of Account since 13th December 2023

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
13.12.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 141.48	£ 28.29	£ 169.77
13.12.2023	DD	British Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm 28/10/23 - 28/11/23	£ 100.81	£ 5.04	£ 105.85
14.12.2023	DD	SSE Energy Solutions	Electricity - Parkers Farm 01/08/23 to 14/11/23	£ 358.26	£ 17.91	£ 376.17
15.12.2023	DD	Sharples (t/a ASL)	Photocopying charges	£ 18.67	£ 3.74	£ 22.41
15.12.2023	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: Nov. 2023 Eee £966.33 Eer £3,550.28	£ 4,516.61		£ 4,516.61
15.12.2023	*	HMRC	Tax £1,400.60 NI £ 2,168.92 (6 Nov 2023 to 5 Dec 2023)	£ 3,569.52		£ 3,569.52
15.12.2023	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 40.20		£ 40.20
18.12.2023	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) Dec. 2023	£ 232.11	£ 46.42	£ 278.53
20.12.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 68.86	£ 13.77	£ 82.63
20.12.2023	*	Reimburse F McDonald	Petty cash float	£ 50.00		£ 50.00
20.12.2023	*	Risley Mot & Truck Ltd	HK64 NNM - supply/fit n/s door mirror indicator bulb	£ 18.23	£ 3.65	£ 21.88
21.12.2023	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 10.63	£ 0.53	£ 11.16
22.12.2023	*	PREMI Clean	Office cleaning services December 2023	£ 343.84	£ 68.77	£ 412.61
28.12.2023	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 56.15	£ 11.23	£ 67.38
02.01.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
02.01.2024	DD	Screw fix	Paint and timber to repair compound gates	£ 174.25	£ 34.84	£ 209.09
02.01.2024	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - January monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
02.01.2024	DD	James Todd (Go Cardless)	Payroll services (December 2023 fee)	£ 59.40	£ 11.88	£ 71.28
02.01.2024	*	Black Box Security	Annual Intruder Alarm Maintenance and monitoring	£ 186.32	£ 37.26	£ 223.58
02.01.2024	*	Society of Local Council Clerks	Annual subscription fee	£ 298.00		£ 298.00
02.01.2024	*	Terrain	Specialist H&S Services	£ 1,654.00	£ 330.80	£ 1,984.80
03.01.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 74.20	£ 14.84	£ 89.04
04.01.2024	*	Milhouse Training	Brushcutter and Hedgecutter training course (SM)	£ 300.00	£ 60.00	£ 360.00
08.01.2024	*	January 2024 Wages	9 staff	£ 13,101.80		£ 13,101.80
09.01.2024	TRS	Transfer to Co-op savings a/c	Activity to keep savings account open	£ 100.00		£ 100.00
10.01.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 71.29	£ 14.26	£ 85.55
11.01.2024	DD	British Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm 29/11/23 - 22/12/23	£ 106.04	£ 5.30	£ 111.34
12.01.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
12.01.2024	*	Viking	Stationery	£ 108.31	£ 21.66	£ 129.97
12.01.2024	*	Warrington Borough Council	Installing SIDs to existing posts x 2	£ 203.01	£ 40.60	£ 243.61
14.01.2024	DD	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 27.89	£ 5.58	£ 33.47
15.01.2024	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) Jan. 2024	£ 232.11	£ 46.42	£ 278.53
16.01.2024	*	C Caddock	Reimb - Amazon seller - metal clothes rack double pole	£ 27.49	£ 5.50	£ 32.99
16.01.2024	*	C Caddock	Reimb - Amazon - pack 50 clothes hangers	£ 15.38	£ 3.08	£ 18.46

Payments of accounts for approval at the January 2024 meeting

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
	DD	Firstcom Europe	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	tbc		
	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) November 2023	£ 232.11	£ 46.42	£ 278.53
	DD	James Todd	January 2024 payroll fee	tbc		
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 11.07	£ 0.55	£ 11.62
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment, mowers)	tbc		
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges - December 2023	£ 40.00		£ 40.00
	DD	British Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm	tbc		
	*	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 15.54	£ 3.11	£ 18.65
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: Dec. 2023 Eee £1,146.41 Eer £4,119.06	£ 5,265.47		£ 5,265.47
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,879.40 £ 2,819.47 (6 Dec 2023 to 5 Jan 2024)	£ 4,698.87		£ 4,698.87
	*	PREMI Clean	Office cleaning services January 2024	tbc		
	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (monthly subs. - in advance) February 2024	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
	*	St John Ambulance	First Aid at Work training (SM and HT)	£ 680.00	£ 136.00	£ 816.00
	*	BNP Paribas	Photocopier lease	£ 170.00	£ 34.00	£ 204.00
	*	Direct365	Legionella Assessment	£ 285.00	£ 57.00	£ 342.00
	*	SAS Daniels	Specialist Employment Law consultant	£ 1,461.00	£ 292.20	£ 1,753.20